

# Ask Jerry



*Jerry Helms*  
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Dear Jerry,

Our partnership needs help with the following sequence:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass!
Pass			

We play 2NT as invitational and I thought my 3♥ was forcing, offering a choice of games. We have agreed to allow you to serve as arbitrator.

BD

Dear BD,

I have been called many things in my life, but despite having arbitrated many bridge disputes, until now, no one has ever referred to me as an arbitrator.

Irrespective of the system you play, whether it be 2/1 Game Force or basic Standard American, North's 3♥ rebid is 100% forcing, accepting South's game invitation and, as you suggested, offering a choice of games.

Although the actual hands which created the issue did not find its way into your question, I will offer a few examples. North's three bids should be consistent with the pattern or shape of his hand. Hmm ... he bid diamonds, bid spades, and then showed delayed support for hearts. Sounds a lot like North is 4=3=5=1 or 4=3=6=0 or, on occasion, 4=3=4=2 with club weakness. Seems a strong attempt to choose a series of bids that resemble

the cards actually held. In addition to "patterning out," bidding in this fashion confirms (as twice stated above) acceptance of South's game invitation.

North's 1♠ "third-suit" rebid shows anywhere from a dead minimum opening bid up to something just short of a game-forcing jump shift. Consistent with the forcing nature of North's third bid could be the following hand:

♠A K 8 3 ♥A 7 5 ♦K Q 9 4 3 ♣7.

The North hand does not have to be quite this strong, but it must be at least strong enough to warrant game opposite an 11- to 12-point invitation.

Defining a second-round jump to 2NT as invitational, not game forcing, is a very good partnership agreement. Based on this, South could hold any of the following to justify his 2NT invitation. Note that just because responder holds five hearts, rebidding them may not be the most descriptive option.

1. ♠Q J 5 ♥K 7 6 5 3 ♦J 7 ♣A 10 9
2. ♠Q 6 2 ♥Q 9 6 2 ♦10 3 ♣A Q J 4
3. ♠J 5 ♥K Q 8 4 ♦J 9 3 2 ♣K J 5
4. ♠9 3 ♥10 8 7 6 3 ♦A 5 ♣K Q J 10

On the first holding, South discovers that North has three-card heart support. Holding a single club stopper and five hearts makes the decision to bid 4♥ very easy. On the second, despite being forewarned about North's concern about the club suit and his three-card heart support, 3NT is the

clear favorite. On the third, facing club shortness/weakness, 5♦ or even 4♥ on the 4-3 fit might be superior to 3NT. On the last, despite the 5-3 heart fit, South might choose 3NT anyway.

On the same invitational auction, if North held a similar pattern hand, but did not wish to accept his partner's invitation, he must pass. This is consistent with one of my basic bidding philosophies: Best to define the meanings of your bids to reach the best game or slam, rather than trying to stop on a dime in the perfect partscore.

From my point of view, consider this issue arbitrated! □

## There's a lesson there

The pair was still arguing about the previous round when they sat down at the table, and they continued to discuss the results vigorously after each deal.

After the round was over, one of their opponents commented: "I certainly like your partnership."

"Why is that?" the big talkers asked.

"Because," the opponent said, "you keep my partner quiet."